

Working Together

Issue 22
Winter/Spring 2006



UNDER CONSTRUCTION



U.S. Senator Rick Santorum Participates in Groundbreaking for New Parking Garage

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A Message from the Director

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(1-866-482-7488)**

Check out our Web site at:
www.va.gov/pittsburgh

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volunteers, patients and friends of
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On the Cover:

Top Photo: A dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Business Service Center at University Drive was held on January 19. *Left to Right:* Melissa Sundin, VAPHS Vice President of Facilities Management; Ira Richmond, VAPHS Associate Director for Patient Care Services; Patricia Nealon, VAPHS Associate Director; Michael E. Moreland, VAPHS Director; U.S. Congressman Mike Doyle; Dr. Rajiv Jain, VAPHS Chief of Staff; James Baker, VAPHS Chief Financial Officer

WARREN PARK PHOTO

Bottom Photo: A groundbreaking ceremony for the parking garage at University Drive was held on February 17. *Left to Right:* Joe Richetti, VA Senior Resident Engineer; Melissa Sundin; Robert Callahan, VAPHS Associate Director for Site Management; Patricia Nealon; Michael E. Moreland; U.S. Senator Rick Santorum; Louis D. Astorino, Founder and Chairman, Astorino; Jeff Turconi, Executive Vice President, P.J. Dick, Incorporated

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of the VAPHS,

Our \$200 million VAPHS Major Construction Project continues to move forward in our efforts to provide an improved environment of care to the veterans we proudly serve. I am very pleased to say that all phases of our major project are on schedule and on budget. The construction of our 1500-space parking garage at the University Drive Division is over 10% completed and is scheduled to open in late 2007. The primary focus of all the design and planning phases for these new buildings that are part of our major project is to create a healing environment to achieve shorter recovery times, reduced pain, greater satisfaction, lower infection rates, and improved recruitment and retention of quality staff. This issue of *Working Together* will focus on the Residential Villas and the Administration Building, which will both be built at our Heinz Division and are in the design process.

The 66,000 square foot Residential Villas set a new direction and standard in design and clinical operation of a 98-bed traditional domiciliary. Six independent residential buildings provide private and semiprivate living environments for homeless and vocational rehabilitation. Four distinct six-bed supervised residential environments were developed for veterans having chronic behavioral health conditions. A shared support center for residents and outpatients provides improved access to clinical areas, group dining, recreational facilities, educational resources and a world class vocational development center. This revolutionary approach creates an environment of 'veterans living in the community'.

The 75,000 square foot, three-story Administration Building features multiple sustainable innovations, such as day lighting to over 85% of space and flexibility in modular arrangement and utilization of the facility.

This Winter/Spring issue of *Working Together* for 2006 also features an article on our smoking cessation program, highlights of our accomplishments in our various patient safety initiatives, the most recent artist's renderings of the various buildings of our major construction project, an article that outlines family leave benefits for staff, and a feature on organ donation, as well as showcasing the many outstanding achievements and milestones of our staff.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Moreland

Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Director Michael Moreland shown demolishing the first wall to initiate the Heinz Division Demolition Project.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System participated in a National Patient Safety Survey conducted by the National Center for Patient Safety (NCPS) in 2000 and in a repeat survey in 2005. The survey sought to identify how the patient safety culture has developed since the inception of local patient safety programs over the previous five year period. Calendar year 2000 served as a baseline, and comparisons to 2005 revealed how facilities have developed. Facilities were also benchmarked against other VA facilities at the National and VISN levels.

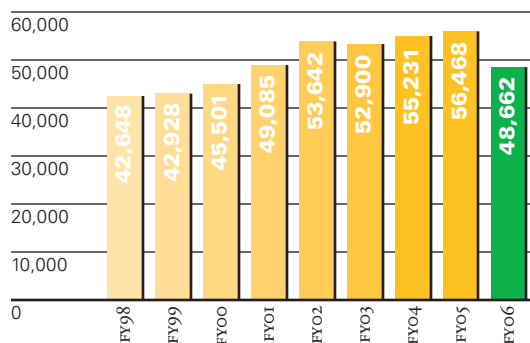
Employee Response to Overall Grade on Patient Safety Culture at Their Facility in 2005

1.00 Failing	2.00 Poor	3.00 Acceptable	4.00 Very Good	5.00 Excellent
VAPHS 2005 (3.91)				
All VA 2005 (3.87)				
VISN 4 2005 (3.92)				

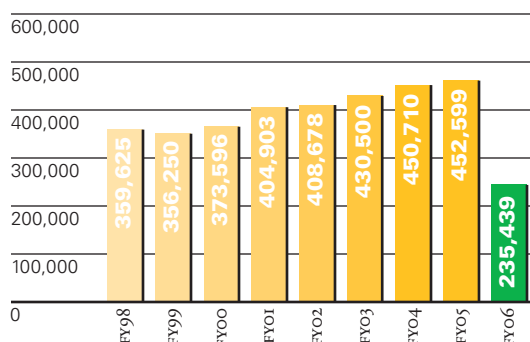
While all dimensions were well within the acceptable range, VAPHS scored “Very Good” in “Perceptions of Patient Safety”, “Job Satisfaction” and “Perceptions of Patient Safety at Your Facility”.



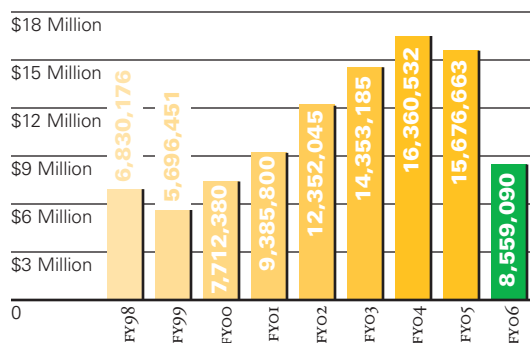
UNIQUE PATIENTS



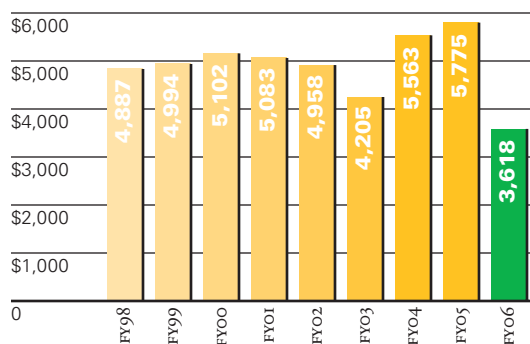
OUTPATIENT VISITS



MEDICAL CARE COST RECOVERY



OBLIGATIONS/UNIQUE PATIENT



FY06 numbers as of March 31, 2006

VAPHS Major Construction Project Update



Residential Living Villas

The Residential Living Villas will be constructed at the Heinz Division and will replace the traditional domiciliary program. The 66,000 square foot project, constructed at an estimated cost of almost \$14 million, features private and semiprivate space in seven separate residential scale villas enhancing care for veterans. The project is currently in the design development stage and scheduled to begin construction in late 2006.

A new 98-bed environment of care will be created for rehabilitative treatment as a residential villa complex. As shown, outpatient services will be contained in the central building along with a 24-bed supported residential environment (A). Six residential homes (B) will house a total of 74 private and semiprivate beds.

Veterans in the Residential Villas will also have access to world class ambulatory care. The new Ambulatory Care Center will have such programs as Primary Care, Specialty Care, Audiology, Dental, Prosthetics, Rehab Medicine, Community Services and an Outpatient Pharmacy.

WARREN PARK PHOTO



Benefits of Residential Living Construction

- State-of-the-art facilities, providing world class care.
- Improved environment, increased patient satisfaction and improved clinical outcomes.
- Residential environment for veterans with a maximum of four residents per home.
- Improved access to dining, job development center, educational resources and recreational facilities.
- Enhanced patient privacy with private and semiprivate accommodations.
- Development of a world class career development center for veterans.

Residential Project Timeline

2005

Demolish vacant structures
Program Planning and Design

2006-2008

Fall 2006 - Begin construction
2008 - Complete construction



Above: Heinz Demolition Phase I Completed

Parking Garage Update

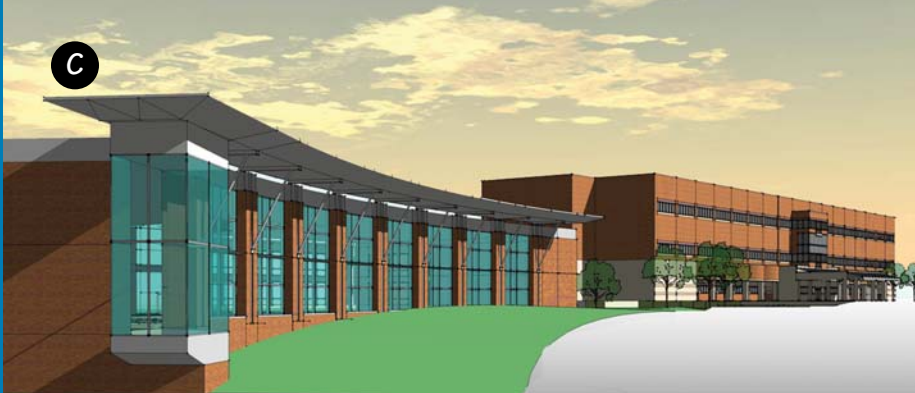
At right is a photo of the status of the parking garage at the University Drive Division as of early April 2006. Construction of this 1,500-space garage began in October 2005. This project is scheduled to be completed in 2007.





The Heinz Division is a 336-bed transitional care facility, which includes Centers of Excellence in the Geriatric Care Program, Hospice, and Palliative Care.

A total of 230,000 square feet of new construction will be added at the Heinz Division to include Ambulatory Care, Residential Living Villas, Administration and Support facilities.



Administration Building Timeline

2006

Spring - Finalize Design
Summer - Award Contract
Fall - Start Construction

2007

Fall - Complete Construction & Activate

Administration Building

The Administration Building (C) will be a 75,000 square foot project, constructed at an estimated cost of \$ 14 million. The project is in the final design stage and scheduled to start construction in the Fall of 2006, with completion in the Fall of 2007.

This new Administration Building will be constructed along the entry boulevard that leads to the Inpatient and Outpatient Buildings at Heinz. The building will consist of consolidated offices for Acquisitions, Fiscal, Human Resources, Health Information Management Services (HIMS), and assorted general administrative & patient care support operations. A centralized storage area for patient records will also be incorporated into the design of the building.

Benefits of Administration Building Construction

- The latest schematic concept provides approximately 75,000 square feet of space for the consolidation of various administrative and patient care support functions.
- Administrative offices will include, but are not limited to: Acquisitions, Fiscal, Human Resources and other general administrative support operations.
- Patient Care support operations will include, but are not limited to: HIMS, Patient Accounts and other general patient care administrative support offices.
- HIMS will have a centralized storage facility for patient records.
- Offices for other governmental agencies may also be included in the overall design of this building.



Mailbox

Dear Mr. Moreland,

I would like to express my gratitude to the VA hospitals for the excellent care that my husband has been given in the past 20-odd years.

This gratitude includes everyone from the check-in to the pharmacy to the technicians to the nurses and doctors.

Special praise goes to Dr. Fried and Dr. Blakowski and Dr. Hoppe at Aspinwall. Without these particular doctors, my husband would not have survived as long as he did. I cannot say enough about the care that he has been given over the years from VA.

Thank you again for the wonderful job that you and the hospital have given to our veterans, especially my husband.

—Mrs. H.T.

Dear Director Moreland,

I recently underwent treatment in your facility, and I want to express my heartfelt satisfaction with the care I received with Dr. Wollstein and Dr. Muqtadir assisting.

I have seen the VA transform over the several years since my discharge in 1991. While the staff have always been kind and helpful to veterans, I view my recent surgery as the culmination of great care. Dr. Wollstein has a soothing manner about her. She presented her professional opinion effectively, taking into account my level of understanding and constraints I faced, and accommodated my particular needs. Her follow-up was first class, and her staff was professional, yet maintained a sense of humor.

Once again, I thank you for this, and please express my thanks to Dr. Wollstein, Dr. Muqtadir, and the staff in Plastics and the Surgery department. I do believe that veterans present the medical community with a unique set of concerns, and I am proud of how well you care for us.

Sincerely yours,

—C.W.

We would like to commend the hospital for changes it has made over the last year regarding interaction between doctors and patient/families.

Doctors and nursing staff explained fully everything done, answered questions without complaint, and included family members in conversations. It is wonderful to not be treated as though you are invisible. Often times patients are confused about their history since they are dealing with current pain and worries over whatever is happening now. Family members are a good source of accurate information, a benefit to both patient and doctor.

The general attitude, on both 6-West and 4-West, was wonderful. We all realize you have a very tough job, and are often understaffed, but it's nice to see smiles and that you take the time to have a short conversation when possible.

All families understand how important visiting hours are and the need to get things done, but it's wonderful to know a spouse can visit even if they work nights, or cannot drive at night. Just sitting quietly beside a spouse of long time, eases the burden on both patient and spouse.

We felt that the hospital deserves a pat on the back, and our grateful thanks for changes it has obviously worked at to make the experience of dealing with illness a little less painful.

—J. and F.W.

Dear Mr. Moreland,

On January the 30th, my husband, N.F., had his car stolen from in front of our house. He had his wallet in the car and—don't ask why—his discharge papers in the wallet (even though he has been out of the Navy for 48 years).

We felt so violated and so upset about the papers and didn't know where to turn.

I remembered that he had applied to the VA to see if he was eligible for any kind of help to cover his medications.

On Wednesday, February the 1st, I called your hospital. That is when our luck turned around. I talked to about four people on the phone and one was nicer than the next. Finally, I was connected to Linda Laster. I told her our problems. She was so helpful and went to a lot of trouble that I am sure she didn't have to do.

Ms. Laster found the copy of the discharge paper and faxed it to my husband along with the telephone number of where to get a new copy.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Linda Laster for being so kind and for performing a task that goes far beyond her call of duty. She certainly did us a tremendous service.

—N.F.

You CAN QUIT SMOKING NOW!

VAPHS has added a new weapon in its arsenal of smoking cessation programs. It is a home based, telephone counseling process developed and refined by a group known as Free & Clear. VAPHS has contracted with Free & Clear to provide professional, convenient, and highly effective smoking cessation counseling to veterans who use the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. All counseling is provided via the telephone at times that are convenient to the veteran. Additionally, medications proven to be effective in the process of quitting smoking will be available through the VAPHS pharmacy. There is no cost to the veteran for the counseling sessions (although there may be a pharmacy co-pay for those veterans who use the medications to assist in the process). The program may also be available to VAPHS employees if they are veterans who are enrolled and actively receive some or all of their medical care through VAPHS.

Veterans can self refer to the program by calling 1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE (1-866-784-8454). Additionally, nursing staff and physicians can refer patients by entering a CPRS consult under the Primary Care section, entitled "Smoking Cessation Telephone Counseling (Free and Clear)".



Quit For Life™ PROGRAM
1.866.QUIT.4.LIFE (784.8454)

SPOTLIGHT ON Barbara Forsha

RN, MSN, CNA, ET

BARBARA FORSHA, RN, MSN, CNA, ET, WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED AS THE MANAGER OF THE QUALITY AND PATIENT SAFETY PROGRAM AT VAPHS. She will provide program oversight, coordination and leadership in all quality and performance improvement activities at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Ms. Forsha will lead and direct the Patient Safety, Continuous Quality Improvement/Total Quality Improvement efforts, External Review, including JCAHO certification, CARF and NCQA preparation and compliance programs.

WARREN PARK PHOTO



Barb began her VA career in March 1998 as the nurse manager for the Primary Care Service Line responsible for the Blue, Gold, and Purple Primary Care Teams as well as the Emergent Care Center. Prior to working at the VA, Ms. Forsha worked as a staff nurse on a medical-surgical unit and also in hemodialysis, medical intensive care, telemetry unit, peritoneal dialysis, emergency room, ambulatory

care, home care, enterostomal therapy, and education. She has functioned as a clinical nurse specialist, administrator for two Medicare-certified home care agencies, nurse manager, and supervisor of a home ventilator program. Before being appointed to this position, Barb served as the lead patient safety manager for the Office of Quality and Patient Safety.

Ms. Forsha received her diploma from Washington Hospital School of Nursing and her bachelor of science in nursing from La Roche College. She received her master of science in nursing in critical care as a clinical nurse specialist from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing. In addition, she completed the Enterostomal Therapy Nurse Education Program at Albany Medical Center. She completed her clinical practicum at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System with Kim Loughry, CETN. She also earned certification in nursing administration from the American Nurses Association.

She resides in South Park with her husband of 16 years, Tim, and their three children, Tim (11), Schuyler (6), and Carissa (4). She was raised in Peters Township.

EMPLOYEES WITH 20 years OR more OF SERVICE!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period October 1, 2005 to March 1, 2006.

45 years

Paul A. Hoffman
Facilities Management

40 years

Walter C. Anderson
Business Service Line

35 years

Leon Elkins
Business Service Line

Gary Glacken
Community Support

David R. Payne
Facilities Management

Edward C. Plowey
Clinical Support

Laureen Poindexter
Nutrition & Food

Robert Raymond
Facilities Management

John D. Rihs
Clinical Support

Joan P. Turkovich
Human Resource Management

30 years

Cannon Anderson
Facilities Management

Raymond Barker
Surgical Specialty

Robert Calabrisi
Patient Care Service Line

Donna Cestra-Matta
Nutrition & Food

John J. Crawford
Police & Security

Cynthia Gaughan
Business Service Line

Thomas E. Karlheim
Medical Specialty

Gregory A. McCullough
Human Resource Management

Karen Stofan
Business Service Line

Marlene L. Waszkiewicz
Information Resource Management

Barbara Wittman
Human Resource Management

25 years

Theodore R. Ditchko
Business Service Line

Merrikay Fausti
Office of the Director

William Glass
Facilities Management

Ronald Heard, Sr.
Facilities Management

Raymond Isadore
Patient Care Service Line

Jill A. Kurzawski
Critical Care Service Line

Sharon Magan
Behavioral Health

Edward Mallory
Nutrition & Food

Katherine Studer
Nutrition & Food

Dennis Viloria
Surgical Specialty

20 years

Wayne Barker
Facilities Management

Chioko Crespo
Human Resource Management

Michael Delsota
Information Resource Management

Nancy B. Epperson
Critical Care Service Line

John H. Heiple
Business Service Line

Margaret A. Hively
Information Resource Management

Alexis Hughes
Business Service Line

William Jackson
Surgical Specialty

Karen L. Janikowski
Primary Care

Susan Rose
Primary Care

Lawrence Scholl
Critical Care Service Line

Pamela Slaby
Patient Care Service Line

Leo Thomas
Clinical Support

Louis Traynor
Facilities Management

Starr Washington
Office of the Director

CONGRATULATIONS!



▼ Family Leave

The need to balance home life with work life is an important aspect for employees and it is even more important when that need involves family illness. There are three leave programs that offer assistance at this crucial time.

Family Medical Leave (FML) can provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for an ill family member, the employee's own illness, and birth or adoption/foster care of a son or daughter. VAPHS bargaining unit employees may use 16 weeks for birth or adoption/foster care reasons.

Sick Leave (SL) for Family Care or Bereavement (C&B) provides up to 13 workdays of sick leave each year. Employees may use 5 workdays and an additional 8 workdays if they maintain a SL balance of 10 workdays. Part-time employees are pro-rated. The employee must maintain a balance of 10 work days of SL to use the additional 8 days. 40 hours of SL may be advanced. The advanced leave may not be used to meet the 10 workday requirement.

Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition can provide 12 weeks of SL. Such leave is not used for short-term conditions. Medical certification will be required. The same limitations that apply to C&B leave apply here.

Since many of the leave situations are complex, employees are encouraged to contact Human Resources Service for guidance.



▼ Do you know what it takes to become an organ donor?

How do you feel about organ and tissue donation? Chances are you think it's a natural, appropriate and giving thing to do and have no real objections to the idea. If so, you're one of the nine out of ten Americans who support organ and tissue donation. But are you also part of the 66 percent that doesn't know what steps are actually required to commit to organ, eye or tissue donation?

The Center for Organ Recovery & Education (CORE) is the non-profit organization that manages the organ and tissue donor program for our region. In addition to facilitating the entire donation process, CORE offers free awareness programs.

We encourage you to learn as much as you can about organ, eye and tissue donation and then take the steps to officially document your decision. Remarkably, one donor can save or enhance the lives of as many as 50 people. Organs like lungs, hearts and livers save lives. And donated kidneys mean freedom from dialysis treatments. Plus bone and tissue transplants can restore movement to crippled or injured limbs, prevent an amputation, or literally bring sight to the blind.

Today more than 90,000 people wait for an organ that will save or greatly enhance their lives. Hundreds of thousands more could benefit from tissue or cornea donation. More than 2,000 people are awaiting transplant in Pennsylvania alone. You can help.

Sign up to be a donor on your driver's license, state identification or donor card.

To request more information, a donor card or a free awareness program, contact CORE at 800-DONORS-7 or visit www.core.org.



WARREN PARK PHOTO

▼ New Cardiac Cath Lab Dedicated

A ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony for the multi-million dollar renovation of our Cardiac Cath Labs was held on Friday, April 21 at 10:30 a.m. U.S. Congressman Tim Murphy participated in this event.

The cardiac renovation project provided a third cardiac laboratory to accommodate the growing demand for diagnostic and therapeutic electrophysiology (EP) procedures, the increased volume of invasive cardiology procedures, and an expansion of the Echocardiography Department. The new invasive cardiology suite includes a recovery area, patient preparatory area, and improved office space. Total renovation costs for the project were approximately \$2.65 million. The entire invasive cardiology suite equals approximately 5,500 square feet, equipped with a dedicated emergency power generator and operating room quality air in each of the three labs. The second phase of the project will implement computer interfaces of the equipment in the Cath and EP Labs, Echocardiography Lab, Electrocardiogram Lab and Stress Test Lab to allow the cardiologists to retrieve images and reports from all of these systems in a single consolidated cardiology computer system.

The VAPHS is committed to providing state-of-the-art care to meet the needs of veterans in VISN 4. To provide this high-level of care in diagnostic and invasive cardiology, new equipment with cutting-edge technology was installed in the three new cardiac laboratories and echocardiography lab. These additions included a bi-plane digital angiography system in the laboratory dedicated to EP procedures and enhanced fluoroscopic equipment optimal for performance of peripheral arterial and carotid interventions in addition to cardiac procedures in one of the two cardiac catheterization laboratories. The enhanced physical facilities and acquisition of \$8 million dollars in state-of-the-art equipment facilitated the recruitment of two additional part-time electrophysiologists, two nurses and one cardiac cath technician. All of these changes will help to ensure that veterans who undergo cardiac catheterization, EP procedures, and/or echocardiography at the VAPHS will receive the highest quality cardiac care. The renovations also provide the flexibility of performing peripheral arterial and carotid interventions in these facilities.

The Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at VAPHS is one of the highest volume invasive cardiac laboratories in the VA.



GLENN HANGARD PHOTO



GLENN HANGARD PHOTO